

## **Organic Pasture**

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Management of an organic pasture is a matrix of practices and objectives that will improve the health of the soil, allow a variety of species to persist and lead to long-term sustainability.

### **Reasons to Consider Organic Pasture**

- Define what you need or want to accomplish with the site.
- Better health for the land and animals.
- Better health for you and your family,
- Certification
- Control input costs
- Difficult site to manage with equipment
- No equipment
- Part of a holistic farm plan
- Part of an enterprise change or new production method.

### **Site Factors**

- Assess the area and understand what is already there.
- History of the area
- Number of animals to support and for how long each season.
- Can it be divided?
- Fencing costs.
- Inventory to plant species present.
- Which species are dominant? Desirable or undesirable.
- Problem areas (i.e.;. brush, weeds, drainage)

## **Approaches to Management of the Pasture**

- Improve your observational skills; record keeping
- Learn to identify plant species. This will allow you to understand the diversity and give you a basis to observe the changes over time.
- Rotational grazing practices.
  - Rest periods for proper regrowth. Time to allow reestablishment of native plants that may be present.
- Plant mix
  - Interseed with legumes and grasses. Use a variety (i.e.; Birdsfoot trefoil, alfalfa, white clover.)
- Soil microbiology
  - A diversity of plants will build soil tilth as well as create a balance for microbial growth.

## **Management Practices**

- Improper management will yield low productivity.
- No till interseeding.
- Mow or clip after grazing to encourage foliar growth.
- Use of a drag to spread manure paddies for better fertilizing and expose fly larvae.
- Hand cut or dig brush, multiflora rose, and other weeds.
- Observe the weeds present and try to understand what they are telling you about the area.
- Use compost.
- Foliant sprays.
- Keep livestock off under wet conditions.
- Allow natural control of weed species like Canada thistle.
- Increased habitat diversity will allow for beneficial insect and bird species.

## **Ecosystem Services**

- An organic pasture will promote and sustain what all the natural ecological systems provide in a wild setting.
- Pollinators.
- Regeneration of soils and the renewal of fertility.
- Pest control.
- Decomposition of waste.
- Encourage wildlife (i.e. Ground nesting birds, small mammals and predators).
- Natural nitrogen fixation.
- Increasing biodiversity.
- Ever greater microbial activity in the soil.
- Healthy ecosystem. Healthy farm.